Springfield Township High School

**Graduation Project Annotated Bibliography**

**Student Name:**

**Annotation # 4**

**MLA Citation:**

Beaumont, Alex. "Light rail hits the buffers." *Public Private Finance* 90 (2005): 30-31. *Business Source Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 24 Feb. 2011.

**INFORMATION:**

Author’s credentials:

Alex Beaumont is a journalist for various journals associated with the field of public transportation. Beaumont most often writes about topics involving investors and revenue from public transportation systems.

Scope and purpose of the work:

Beaumont’s purpose in this article is to provide information on why current light rail systems in Britain are failing and what can be done to improve them.

Intended Audience:

This article was written for people who are familiar with the field of public investments. Beaumont talks a lot about the reasons for a lack of investment, but this involves going into what investment looks like and how a lack of unified structure has made it difficult. Beaumont uses lots of abbreviations and jargon that made understanding all of the article difficult.

**SUMMARY**

Thesis or main idea:

Light rail costs have also increased due to uncertainty over standards, a consequence of the sector’s minority status. There simply aren’t many tram schemes, so simple operating criteria such as safety standards are not nearly as well established as those for heavy rail.

Summary of main arguments:

Beaumont argues that the lack of a unifying light rail system in Britain has caused several systems to not be profitable. This lack of unity has also caused the light rail systems of Britain to rely heavily on government subsidy, as they are unable to sustain themselves through user fees. Beaumont argues that this large failure is due to poor planning and over projection of ridership.

**EVIDENCE**

Summary of evidence:

* Light rail seems like the perfect investment for cities
  + “they look great and create very little pollution. They require no parking facilities, are economical to use and run frequently right into the centre of town” (Beaumont 30)
  + efficient, integrated public transport system” (Beaumont 30)
* While several British cities have invested in light rail systems capital costs have increased usually due to “the time and money associated with diverting utilities” (Beaumont 30)
* “Most extant light rail networks are current operating at a loss.” (Beaumont 30)
* This is due to “actual usage on the existing systems has fallen well short of original forecasts.” (Beaumont 30)
  + Problems for light rail mainly stem from “over-optimistic forecasting, changes in the patronage base, early operational problems affecting services, competition from buses, and physical limitations on the routes selected.” (Beaumont 30)
* Investment opportunities have not been profitable for investors so many companies are playing it safe and not investing at all
* “In light rail you are running a real operating business with real demand where the public don’t pay according to availability. They pay depending on whatever modes are available, what the prices are, what the weather is like.” (Beaumont 31)
  + “there has been a ‘realization that lenders are not prepared to take on market risk.’” (Beaumont 31)
* “Light rail will never really thrive without a clear, centralized strategic vision. Various groups are now at work to try and address this.” (Beaumont 31)

**EVALUATION**

Evaluation of research:

Beaumont does an adequate job at thoroughly researching the topic of light rail. His main focus is on why investors are hesitant to put their money into the system. This topic is interesting, but it is not covered with as much depth as other articles I have read so far. I think that Beaumont does a good job at introducing ideas that can be further researched.

Evaluation of scope:

While Beaumont does a good job at introducing several topics that should be looked into further. He does not do a good job at addressing all of them thoroughly. Beaumont could delve deeper into the fields of light rail system planning and how money is being spent to rework current city infrastructure to accommodate light rail systems.

Evaluation of author bias:

Beaumont is biased towards slowing down investment in light rail systems until a unified plan for all of Britain is established. Beaumont’s bias is revealed through his criticisms of current British light rail systems.

**REFLECTION:**

I think that this article will be helpful in understanding why SEPTA has had such a hard time in getting money to improve their operations. Beaumont makes a lot of good points about what needs to be in place before a light rail system can succeed. Getting a good understanding of why public transportation systems fail is really important for my topic. If I am going to try and present SEPTA with alternatives, I will need to make sure that I am not suggesting something that could backfire and easily collapse. Sustainability is something that is emerging as an important topic for me to look further into. I think I need to get a better sense of why some public transportation systems are successful and others are not.